Research Notes for Mary Kenney (1820 - 1902)

Research Overview:

Mary Kenney can be traced with unusual continuity across marriage, childbearing, widowhood, and old age. Although no birth records exist for her townland during this period, DNA evidence points strongly to the townland of Kilmactigue, County Sligo, Ireland, and this origin is treated here as correct. She immigrated to the United States by 1850 and married Patrick Dempsey in Washington, D.C., in 1852. For more than four decades, she appears consistently in records as a wife and mother, moving with her family through Washington, Virginia, Indiana, Missouri, and Kansas, her life unfolding in close proximity to both kin and crisis.

The most defining feature of Mary Kenney's life in the record is loss. By 1900, she reported ten children born, with only one surviving, a figure supported by tightly spaced births, repeated infant deaths, and the disappearance of children between censuses. These losses occurred alongside frequent relocations and during years marked by instability, including the Civil War. Newspaper articles also place Mary Kenney directly in family conflict, most notably a violent incident in Washington, D.C., that names her brother Michael Kenney and explicitly establishes their kin relationship. By the end of the nineteenth century, she was living as a widow following her husband's critical injury in a train accident, though no civil death record for him has been found. She died in Kansas City in 1903, closing a long life marked by endurance, hardship, and survival.

Speculative Narrative:

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Timeline

c May 1819 to 1822 – **Born** possibly at Kilmactigue, Sligo, Ireland.[1]
This possible birth townland is a hypothesis based on DNA research and an email from Theresa Liewer. **About 1820 - The birth of brother** John Kenney was at Kilmactigue, Sligo, Ireland.[2]
However, records for that area don't exist for this timeframe.

c 1822 - The birth of brother Michael Kenney was at Kilmactigue, Sligo, Ireland.[3]

Feb 1850 – Origin Ireland[4]
What ship did she come on, what date, and what is her arrival port? Who else did she immigrate with? Source: 1900 census

1850 – Arrival in New York, New York, New York.[5]

30 Aug 1852 - Marriage to Patrick Dempsey at Washington, DC.[6]
St. Patrick's Church - Matrimonial Register, 1807-1872, page 29: August 30, 1852, married Patrick Dempsey and Mary Kenny. Witnesses Augustine Kenny and Anne Welsh. /s/ Timothy J. O'Toole

5 Mar 1855 - Birth of son James Thomas Dempsey (1855 - 1936) at Washington, DC.[7]

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[1] Baptismal record is unlikely to exist. DNA matches indicate that this is probable.

[2] Baptismal record is unlikely to exist. DNA matches indicate that this is probable.

[3] Baptismal record is unlikely to exist. DNA matches indicate that this is probable.

[4] Need to a find ship record

[5] 1900 U.S. Federal Census (Population Schedule), Ward 6, Kansas City, Wyandotte County, Kansas, ED 161, Sheet 14, Dwelling 299, Family 305, James Dempsey household; digital image, "1900 United States Federal Census," Ancestry.

[6] Washington, District of Columbia County Court, Marriages 1852, Patrick Demsey and Mary Kenny, married 30 August 1852; FamilySearch Library Digital Collection 4258999, digital image, Catalog, FamilySearch.

[7] Baptism Register, Aug. 1848-Sept. 1857. Page 176: March 8, 1855, Baptized James Thomas, born March 5, 1855, of Patrick Dempsey and Mary Kenny, his wife. Spr. Patrick and Bridget Welsh. /s/ Francis E. Boyle

10 Nov 1856 - Birth of daughter Mary Ann Dempsey (1856 - 1896) at Washington, DC.[8]

1857- Birth of Baby 3 Dempsey in Washington, DC.[9]

In 1900, her mother, Mary Kenney Dempsey, lived at 650 1st Street in Kansas City. According to the 1900 census, she was the mother of one living child and reported ten children born in total; stillborn children were not included in this count.

May 1859 - Birth of son John Dempsey at Covington, Alleghany, Virginia.[10]

Apr 1860 - Birth and Death of son Patrick Dempsey (1860 - 1860).[11]

The family was recorded on the 1860 census in Covington, Virginia, 243 miles from Washington, DC. John is not on the 1870 census.

I contacted St. Francis of Assisi Church, 118 N. New St. Staunton, VA 24401office@stfrancisparish.org Request: A copy of old family baptisms (Irish) - Fr. Tom Collins at Sacred Heart suggested I check with you due to the date of these baptisms.

1 Jun 1860 - U.S. Census at Covington, Alleghany, Virginia.[12]

Patrick Dempsey, 29
Mary Dempsey, 28
James T Dempsey, 5
Mary A Dempsey,
John Dempsey, 1

[8] Baptism Register, Aug. 1848-Sept. 1857. Page 256, Nov. 20, 1856: Baptized Mary Anne, born Nov. 10/56 of Patrick Dempsey and Mary Kenny his wife. Spr. Philip Gilhooly and Anne Gilhooly. /s/ Timy. Jos. O'Toole.

[9] Birth record of unknown child

[10] 1860 U.S. Federal Census (Population Schedule), Alleghany County, Virginia, p.7, Dwelling 44, Family 42, Patrick Dempsey household; digital image, "1860 Unites States Federal Census," Ancestry

[11] U.S. Federal Census Mortality Schedules, 1850-1880, Ancestry

[12] 1860 U.S. Federal Census (Population Schedule), Alleghany County, Virginia, p.7, Dwelling 44, Family 42, Patrick Dempsey household; digital image, "1860 Unites States Federal Census," Ancestry.

1862 - Birth of Baby 6 Dempsey in Washington, DC.[13]

12 Aug 1863 - Article about arrests in Washington, DC.[14]

Two articles from a Washington DC newspaper prove the relationship between Michael and Mary Kenney:

Local News

Assault and Battery - Patrick Dempsey was arrested last night for assaulting and beating Michael Kenney at a shop corner K and 1st street. Dempsey keeps the shop, and Kenney was one of his patrons. They were engaged in settling an account between them, and a question arose as to the correctness. It resulted in Dempsey striking Kenney with a weight and making two subsequent assaults upon him with the weight, in which Kenney was knocked down and was apparently lifeless. A friend interfered and pacified Dempsey and took Kenney to a surgeon to dress his wounds. Kenney's lip was split, and three teeth broken out of his mouth, besides other bruises on his head and face. Dempsey and Kenney are brother-in-law.

"Brother and Sister - Michael Kenny was arrested last night for assault and battery on Mary Dempsey, his sister. It appears that Mrs. Dempsey went to Kenny's house and asked for her husband to come home. But he, being averse to an immediate departure, delayed. Mrs. Dempsey grew impatient and exhibited her anger by declaring the house was a bad house. Michael Kenny went out to her and on the way, picked up a "bit of a stick," as a female witness called it, struck Mrs. Dempsey on her head, cutting her severely. Justice Giberson held him to bail for court."

1864 - Birth of Baby 7 Dempsey in Washington, DC.[15]

1866- Birth of Baby 8 Dempsey in Washington, DC.[16]

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[13] Birth record of an unknown child

[14] "Brother and Sister," Evening Star, Washington, District of Columbia, 12 August 1863, p.2, col. 5; digital image, Newspapers.com.

[15] Birth record of an unknown child

[16] Birth record of an unknown child

Before 1870- Death of son John Dempsey at an unknown place.[17]

1 Jun 1870 - U.S. Census at Jefferson, Clark, Indiana.[18]

Pat Dempsey, 38
Mary Dempsey, 38
Jas Dempsey, 15
Mary Dempsey, 13

By 1870, the family was enumerated in Jeffersonville, Indiana, marking a relocation from Washington, D.C., after more than seventeen years. The move places them across the river from Louisville, Kentucky, where Patrick may have worked.

1 Jun 1880 - U.S. Census at Lone Oaks, Bates, Missouri.[19]

Patrick Dempsey - white, male, age 50, born Ireland, father born Ireland, mother born Ireland
Mary Dempsey - white, female, age 48, born Ireland, father born Ireland, mother born Ireland

1 Mar 1885 - Kansas Census at Armourdale, Wyandotte, Kansas.[20]
James Whalen, 36
James Massen, 46
Frank Evans, 35
Mike Whalen, 45
Mary Whalen, 25
Kate Whalen, 7
Minnie Whalen, 5
Jane Whalen, 3

[17] Birth record of an unknown child

[18] 1870 U.S. Federal Census (Population Schedule), Jefferson, Clark County, Indiana, p.398A, Dwelling 294, Family 313, Pat Dempsey household; digital image, "1870 Unites States Federal Census," Ancestry.

[19] 1880 U.S. Federal Census (Population Schedule), Lone Oak, Bates County, Missouri, ED 159, Sheet 220A, Dwelling 156, Family 170, Patrick Dempsey household; digital image, "1880 Unites States Federal Census," Ancestry.

[20] 1885 Kansas State Census, Wyandotte, Wyandotte County, Lines 13 -15, Patrick Dempsey household; digital image, "Kansas, U.S., State Census Collection, 1855 - 1925," Ancestry.

1895 – Kansas Census.[21]

James Whalen, 42
Mary Whalen, 38
Patrick Whalen, 9
Mike Whalen, 5
Eddie Whalen, 3
Wm Whalen, 1

Patrick Dempster, 62
Mary Dempster, 61
Nellie Dempster, 15
Geo Smith, 28
James Irvin, 19

1890, 1891 - Directory in Kansas City, Kansas. Lived at 916 Pyle.[22]

10 May 1896 – **Death of daughter Mary Ann Dempsey** at Kansas City, Wyandotte, Kansas.[23]

Dec 1898 - Accident on the train to Leavenworth, Kansas, involving her husband, Patrick Dempsey.[24]

1898 - 1900 - Death of husband Patrick Dempsey (1822 - 1898).

Patrick Dempsey does not appear again in the record after the December 1898 train accident. By 1900, Mary Kenney Dempsey was enumerated as a widow.

Research - Was there a coroner's inquest when he died? Would those records be a KSHS?

[21] 1895 Kansas State Census, Ward 6, Kansas City, Wyandotte County, p.10, Dwelling 1702, Family 1727, James Whalen household; digital image, "Kansas, U.S. State Census Collection, 1855 - 1925," Ancestry

[22] Kansas City, Kansas Directory, 1890

[23] Kansas City (Kansas) City Clerk, Record of Mortality, Volume A (1892 - 1903), p.71, Mrs. Whalen, died 10 May 1896. A Find a Grave memorial was created based on this information.

[24] "Patrick Dempsey Run Over by Train and Badly Injured," The Leavenworth Weekly Times, Leavenworth, Kansas, 28 December 1898, p. 4 col. 5.

1 Jun 1900 - U.S. Census at Kansas City, Wyandotte, Kansas.[25]

JT Dempsey - head
Mary Dempsey -wife
Mary Dempsey - mother

In 1900, Mary Kenney Dempsey was enumerated as a widow living in her son's household. She reported ten children born, with one surviving.

31 Oct 1903 - Death at Kansas City, Kansas.[26]

"Armourdale Pioneer Dead

Passing of Mrs. Mary Dempsey in Her Eighty-Fourth Year
Mrs. Mary Dempsey, 84 years old, died yesterday at her home, 308 Osage avenue, Armourdale. Mrs. Dempsey was one of the oldest settlers of Armourdale. She was the mother of James Dempsey, a contractor of Armourdale. The funeral will be held from her late home at 2:30 o'clock this afternoon."

November 1, 1903
Kansas City Star

Nov 1903 - Burial in a single grave at Mt. Calvary Cemetery in Kansas City, Kansas.[27]

The rest of her family and many of her grandchildren are buried at this cemetery. The location of the grave is not known.

[25] 1900 U.S. Federal Census (Population Schedule), Ward 6, Kansas City, Wyandotte County, Kansas, ED 161, Sheet 14, Dwelling 299, Family 305, James Dempsey household; digital image, "1900 United States Federal Census," Ancestry.

[26] Kansas City (Wyandotte County, Kansas) City Clerk, Record of Mortality, Volume A (1892 - 1903), Number 9184, May Dempsey, dated 31 October 1903, FamilySearch Library Digital Collection 7579850, digital image, Catalog, FamilySearch.

[27] "Find a Grave Index," , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QVK2-C31W: 13 June 2023), Mary Kenny Dempsey, ; Burial, Kansas City, Wyandotte, Kansas, United States of America, Mount Calvary Cemetery; citing record ID 51863497, *Find a Grave*, http://www.findagrave.com.

Appendix:

B.

My research question is to analyze her 100+ DNA matches to understand her family structure better and evaluate conflicting or inaccurate information found in other online family trees. (Karen Whalen 114 matches)